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SUBJECT: PRT SALAH AD DIN: TUZ DISTRICT'S ELECTION RESULTS

REFLECT REDUCED TENSIONS

Classified By: Political Deputy Counselor John Fox for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

(U) This is a PRT Salah ad Din (SAD) reporting cable.

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Credible, legitimate, and peaceful Provincial Council (PC) elections in the Tuz district of SAD province reflect low ethnic tensions in this disputed area. The Kurdish parties in SAD added non-Kurds to their electoral list, and Turcoman engagement in the democratic process resulted in their receiving the most votes in the district. These factors, combined with acceptance of a reduced presence in the PC by Kurds and Turcomen, signal that, while Tuz's provincial affiliation and borders may be subject to review in the UNAMI reports on Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs) areas, it lacks the same potential for violence as other disputed territories. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) In the January provincial elections, voter turnout in Tuz district was 57 percent, with 50,231 out of 87,971 eligible voters participating. NOTE: All data discussed here is drawn from an unofficial UNAMI report, please hold close. END NOTE. The big winner in Tuz was the Iraqi Turcoman Front (ITF) list, which received 19,013 votes, up from 6,819 votes in 2005. The head of ITF, Ali Hashem, received the second-highest individual vote total in the province--*10,593 votes*--and almost all his votes came from the Tuz district. He is the most popular single political figure in Tuz, albeit one whose support is within the Turcoman community (who make up roughly 40 percent of the Tuz population). His electoral appeal seems based on the ITF's ability to provide services and his standing as a local leader, rather than an exclusive focus on Turcoman ethnic solidarity. Ali has indicated to the PRT that he is willing to discuss a coalition with the Kurdish-led Brotherhood and Peaceful Coexistence (BPC) list.

13. (C) The Kurdish parties that are the two main pillars of the BPC--the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)--saw their strength decrease in the 2009 elections. BPC received 16,637 votes from the Tuz district in 2009, whereas its predecessor, the explicitly ethnic "Kurdistani Gathering" list, won 24,989 votes in 2005. Ostensibly non-ethnic, the BPC still won two PC seats this year.

14. (C) The PUK and KDP were disappointed with lower turnout among their constituents, and the parties' leaders may have anticipated their voters' dissatisfaction by placing an Islamist with no previous partisan affiliation with the KDP or the PUK in the number-one slot on the list. This candidate received the most (5,587) votes on the BPC list. He was selected for his educational achievements (including a doctorate in Islamic studies), eloquence and piety.

15. (C) The other BPC candidate who won a seat is not Kurdish, but a Sunni Arab member of the Iraqi Communist Party who lives near Tikrit. The BPC had some success in gathering votes from non-Kurdish communities in Tuz, and won 3,706

votes in the Amerli and Sulayman Beg sub-districts, compared to 2,771 votes in the 2005 provincial elections. BPC drew 1,014 votes from outside the Tuz district.

16. (SBU) Tuz voters (mostly Kurdish and Turcoman) turned out in large numbers in 2005, whereas most Sunni Arabs (the overwhelming majority in the province) boycotted those elections. In 2009, Sunni Arab turnout province-wide was much higher. In addition, Tuz citizens' disappointment with the provincial government's provision of basic services seems to have depressed turnout this year. There is a sense on the Tuz "street" that voting has become irrelevant. This is QTuz "street" that voting has become irrelevant. This is particularly true among Kurds, who seem disenchanted with the PUK and KDP leadership--as evidenced by the lack of longstanding PUK or KDP connections for either winning BPC candidate.

17. (C) The 57 percent turnout in Tuz is still high for a district in any province. And local leaders have voiced few complaints about the drop in the number of seats in Tuz's Provincial Council (PC) from 14 of 41 to 3 of 28 seats--a feature of the increase in voting throughout the rest SAD province, rather than a catastrophic loss of voting power in Tuz.

COMMENT

18. (SBU) The recent elections in Tuz have reduced Turcoman and Arab concern about Kurdish ambitions in the district and the integrity of the democratic process, while the Kurdish parties have adapted to demographic reality and reached out

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to groups beyond their traditional constituencies. Tuz will be included in UNAMI's (DIBs) reports because of the district's proximity to Kirkuk, its substantial Kurdish minority (around a quarter to a third of the population), and because Tuz belonged to Kirkuk province until the creation of SAD as a province in 1976. But the signs of political accommodation described above suggest that the potential for ethnic conflict in Tuz is considerably lower than in other disputed areas along the Iraq-Kurdistan Region border. END
COMMENT.
BUTENIS